

in France during nearly the same long period, without the aid of a standing army. The standing army and the exuberant loyalty of the French made their monarch unquestioned master of the State. In England the king could appeal to no organised permanent force, and the fact that he carried through changes so distasteful to the vast majority of the nation is a striking proof of his masterly will, his skill in statecraft, his tact as well as his tyranny. " There had evidently," says Mr Hallam, " been a retrograde tendency towards absolute monarchy between the reigns of Henry VI. and Henry VIII. Nor could this be attributed to the common engine of despotism, a military force. For except the yeomen of the guard, fifty in number, and the common servants of the king's household, there was not in time of peace an armed man receiving pay in England. A government that ruled by intimidation was absolutely destitute of force to intimidate. Hence risings of the mere commonalty were sometimes highly dangerous, and lasted much longer than ordinary. A rabble of Cornish-men in the reign of Henry VII., headed by a blacksmith, marched up from their own county to the suburbs of London without resistance. The insurrection of 1525, in consequence of Wolsey's illegal taxation; those of the north ten years afterwards, wherein, indeed, some men of higher quality were engaged ; and those which broke out simultaneously in several counties under Edward VI., excited a well-grounded alarm in the country, and in the two latter instances were not quelled without much time and exertion. The reproach of servility and patient acquiescence under usurped power falls, not on the English people but on its national leaders. We have seen, indeed, that the House of Commons now and then gave signs of an independent spirit (but hardly at all under Henry VIII., Mr Hallam should have added), and occasioned more trouble even to Henry VIII. than his compliant nobility. They yielded to every mandate of his imperious will; they bent with every breath of his capricious humour ; they are responsible for the illegal trial, for the iniquitous attainder, for the sanguinary statute, for the tyranny which they sanctioned by law, and for that which they permitted to subsist without law."

With the death of Henry VIII., in January 1547, the